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Department of State

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Action
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Info

FROM: SAIGON (NOLTING)

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 537, OCTOBER 25, 1 P.M.
1961

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PRIORITY

DEPARTMENT PASS WHITE HOUSE, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, AND JCS

WHITE HOUSE EYES ONLY FOR THE PRESIDENT

STATE EYES ONLY FOR RUSK AND UNDER SECRETARY JOHNSON

DEFENSE EYES ONLY SECRETARY MCNAMARA

JCS EYES ONLY GENERAL LEMNITZER

FROM GENERAL TAYLOR

OUR MISSION IS WINDING UP ITS BUSINESS IN SAIGON; AND MOVING TO BANGKOK OCTOBER 25. RESULTS TO DATE ARE REPORTED IN 536.

WITH REGARD TO THE CRITICAL QUESTION OF INTRODUCING U. S. MILITARY FORCES INTO VN:

MY VIEW IS THAT WE SHOULD PUT IN A TASK FORCE CONSISTING LARGELY OF LOGISTICAL TROOPS FOR THE PURPOSE OF PARTICIPATING IN FLOOD RELIEF AND AT THE SAME TIME OF PROVIDING A U. S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN VN CAPABLE OF ASSURING DIEM OF OUR READINESS TO JOIN HIM IN A MILITARY SHOWDOWN WITH THE VIET CONG OR VIET MINH. TO RELATE THE INTRODUCTION OF THESE TROOPS TO THE NEEDS OF FLOOD RELIEF SEEMS TO ME TO OFFER CONSIDERABLE ADVANTAGES IN VC AND ABROAD. IT GIVES A SPECIFIC HUMANITARIAN TASK

DECLASSIFIED
Authority State ltr 10/28/76 OIA Ltr 11/30/76
By MMG, NARS, Date 5/23/77

~~TOP SECRET~~

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TASK AS THE PRIME REASON FOR THE COMING OF OUR TROOPS AND AVOIDS ANY SUGGESTION THAT WE ARE TAKING OVER RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SECURITY OF THE COUNTRY. AS THE TASK IS A SPECIFIC ONE, WE CAN EXTRICATE OUR TROOPS WHEN IT IS DONE IF WE SO DESIRE. ALTERNATIVELY, WE CAN PHASE THEM INTO OTHER ACTIVITIES IF WE WISH TO REMAIN LONGER.

THE STRENGTH OF THE FORCE I HAVE IN MIND ON THE ORDER OF 6,8000 TROOPS. ITS INITIAL COMPOSITION SHOULD BE WORKED OUT HERE AFTER STUDY OF THE POSSIBLE REQUIREMENTS AND CONDITIONS FOR ITS USE AND SUBSEQUENT MODIFICATIONS MADE WITH EXPERIENCE.

IN ADDITION TO THE LOGISTICAL COMPONENT, IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO INCLUDE SOME COMBAT TROOPS FOR THE PROTECTION OF LOGISTICAL OPERATIONS AND THE DEFENSE OF THE AREA OCCUPIED BY U. S. FORCES. ANY TROOPS COMING TO VN MAY EXPECT TO TAKE CASUALTIES.

why?

NEEDLESS TO SAY, THIS KIND OF TASK FORCE WILL EXERCISE LITTLE DIRECT INFLUENCE ON THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE V.C. IT WILL, HOWEVER, GIVE A MUCH NEEDED SHOT IN THE ARM TO NATIONAL MORALE, PARTICULARLY IF COMBINED WITH OTHER ACTIONS SHOWING THAT A MORE EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP IN THE COMMON CAUSE HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED BETWEEN THE GVN AND THE U. S.

NOLTING

SMD/21